

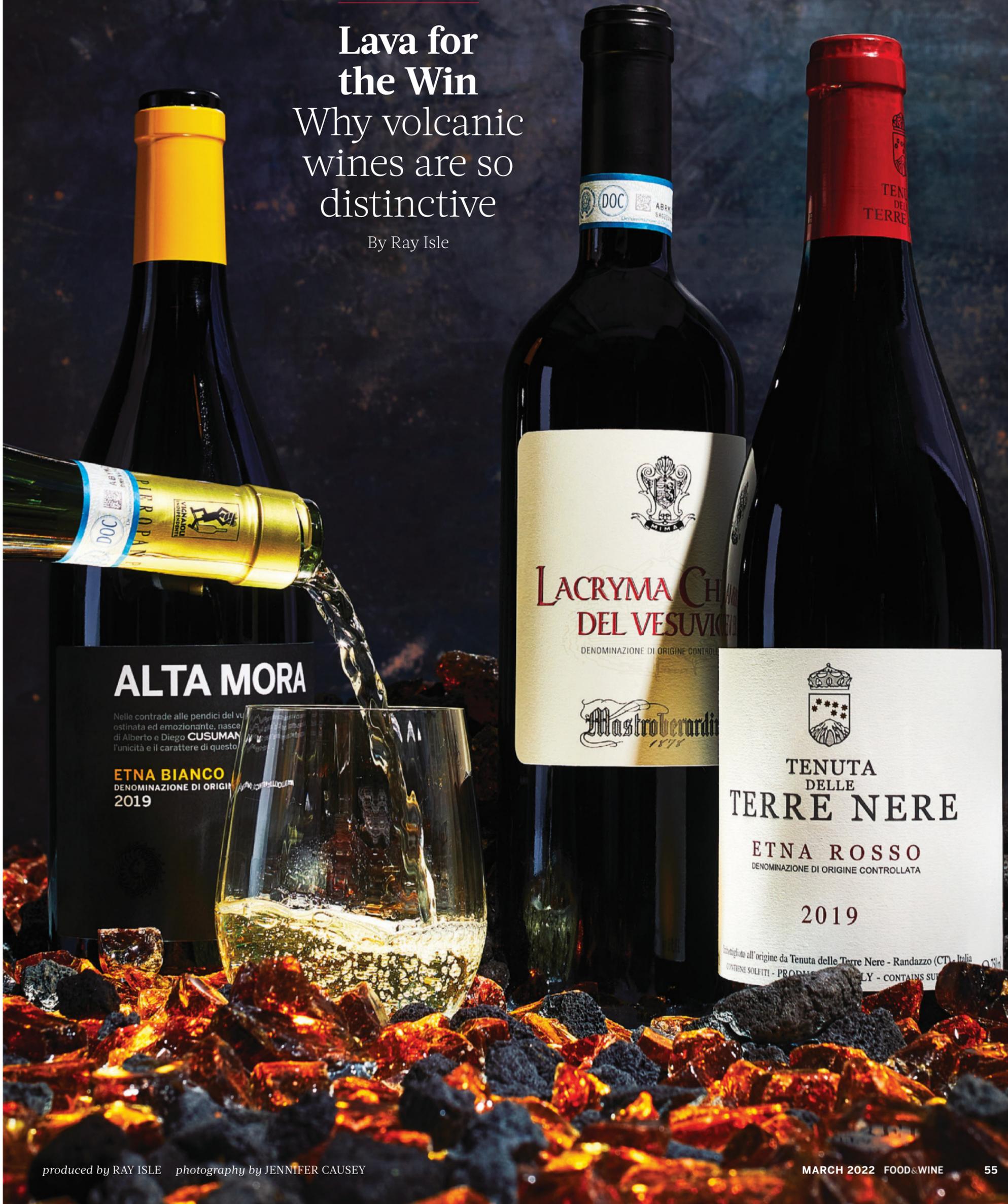
BOTTLE SERVICE

WHAT TO DRINK NOW

Lava for the Win

Why volcanic wines are so distinctive

By Ray Isle



ALTA MORA

Nelle contrade alle pendici del vulcano Etna, nasce un vino di grande personalità, ostinato ed emozionante, nasce da Alberto e Diego CUSUMANO, l'unicità e il carattere di questo territorio.

ETNA BIANCO
DENOMINAZIONE DI ORIGINE CONTROLLATA
2019

LACRYMA CHRISTI DEL VESUVIO

DENOMINAZIONE DI ORIGINE CONTROLLATA

Mastroberardino
1878

TENUTA DELLE TERRE NERE

ETNA ROSSO
DENOMINAZIONE DI ORIGINE CONTROLLATA

2019

Prodotto all'origine da Tenuta delle Terre Nere - Randazzo (CT) - Italia
CONTIENE SOLFITTI - PRODOTTO IN ITALIA - CONTAINS SULFITES

ON SOME LEVEL, it seems a little nuts to make wine on the slopes of a volcano. After all, Sicily's Mount Etna has erupted four times in the past 10 years; the Cumbre Vieja volcano in Spain's Canary Islands has been spewing lava and ash for two months straight as I write this, damaging vineyards on the island of La Palma as it does. Pliny the Elder, who witnessed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 B.C., wrote, "As to the wines of Pompeii, they [arrive] at their full perfection in 10 years." Likely some of the citizens of that unfortunate town were enjoying a well-aged glass or two even as volcanic ash began to darken the sky.

So why not plant your vines on a nice, flat, no-magma-around-here-thank-you stretch of land instead? The thing is, volcanic soils seem to help impart a distinctive character to wine, both red and white, not found in other places. Water drains through volcanic soil easily; the soil also isn't usually very fertile and is high in mineral content. The result tends to be smaller, higher-acid, less effusively ripe fruit, producing taut, savory wines, concentrated in flavor but rarely heavy or dense—in my mind, ideal for the cool early days of spring.

Of course, not all volcanic soils are found on active volcanoes. Conveniently—or thankfully—volcanoes that went extinct millions of years ago can be just as helpful. So in addition to wines from Etna and the Canaries, look to regions like Soave in Northern Italy, Santorini in Greece, parts of Oregon's Willamette Valley and California's Napa Valley, and Lake County in California. And, of course, there's Campania in Italy, where you can even visit Pompeii and try the wines in situ if you like. I mean, so what if Vesuvius is still considered an active volcano, right?

RED

2019 FRONTÓN DE ORO TINTO TRADICIONAL (\$17)

Light on the palate and full of savory spice—bay and black pepper—and lively red fruit, this is a terrific intro to the wines of the Canary Islands.

2018 BERMEJO LISTÁN NEGRO (\$23)

Give this Canary Islands red a little air to begin with, to let its slightly raw, funky aromas mellow. Then enjoy its subtle tannins and smoky, stony, black-cherry flavors.

2019 MASTROBERARDINO LACRYMA CHRISTI DEL VESUVIO (\$23)

This light, savory red, made from the local Piediroso grape, comes from vineyards directly below Mount Vesuvius.

2019 TENUTA DELLE TERRE NERE ETNA ROSSO (\$25)

Brimming with the aromas and flavors of wild strawberries, this Etna Rosso is as dry as volcanic rock and finishes on fine, elegant tannins.

2019 PLANETA ETNA ROSSO (\$30)

This lightly smoky red, transparent ruby in hue and filled with bright, red-berry flavors, comes from vines planted 800 meters up on the north side of Mount Etna.

2018 ELENA FUCCI TITOLO AGLIANICO DEL VULTURE (\$34)

If there's an aroma that could be called floral iron, then this gorgeous Southern Italian red has it, along with blackberry fruit and terrific intensity.

2017 VALLANA BOCA (\$34)

The tiny Boca DOC in Northern Italy lies on the site of a long-extinct volcano and produces reds like this one: earthy, with gripping tannins and dark cherry fruit.

2019 OBSIDIAN RIDGE CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$38)

This rich, dark-fruited Cabernet's name is justified: Chunks of obsidian turn up regularly in the Lake County vineyard where it's from.

2019 CRISTOM JESSIE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR (\$75)

The volcanic basalt soils of Oregon's Eola-Amity Hills AVA contribute to the character of this silky Pinot, with its cherry liqueur and tea leaf notes.



WHITE

2020 CASA D'AMBRA ISCHIA BIANCO (\$16)

This white from Italy's Campania region, made from the local Forastera and Biancolella varieties, offers refreshingly brisk melon, lime, and honey-suckle flavors.

2020 SANTO SANTORINI ASSYRTIKO (\$27)

As bracing as sea spray, Santo's Assyrtiko from the volcanic island of Santorini suggests lemon and grapefruit peel, with a faint smoky note.

2020 DAVID PAIGE RPG VINEYARD PINOT BLANC (\$28)

If you like this lightly peppery, floral white from top Oregon winemaker David Paige, seek out the excellent Pinot Noirs he's making as well.

2019 INAMA FOSCARINO SOAVE CLASSICO (\$28)

What's not to love in this aromatic, old-vine Soave? It's bright and vivid, full of lively quince flavors and ending on crushed-rock mineral notes.

2019 ALTA MORA ETNA BIANCO (\$33)

Initially, this Etna white feels reserved in a smoky-stony way, but then the vivid pineapple-orange fruit notes seem to fan out almost like a peacock's tail.

2019 PIEROPAN CALVARINO SOAVE CLASSICO (\$40)

Winemaker Dario Pieropan crafts this stony, intense, age-worthy white from vines in his family's hillside Calvarino vineyard.

2019 GAI'A THALASSITIS SANTORINI ASSYRTIKO (\$43)

This complex, chalky white is austere the same beautiful way that Santorini's whitewashed Cycladic architecture is.

